

August 10, 2010

Dear DOER,

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the biomass issue. I realize that the Manomet Study was charged with a range of questions and I believe it did a thorough job of addressing those questions.

I am of the opinion that the State should discontinue all subsidies and benefits to the biomass industry. There are many issues that have not been thoroughly looked at, and any incentives could have unintended consequences. For me they include:

The availability of the wood supply does not seem to include the potential changes in using wood for home heating. Furthermore, by my calculations, Massachusetts has one half a forested acre per capita. At the rate of about 1/2 one cord of wood growing on an acre (courtesy of the Harvard Forest), the state produces the equivalent of about 20 gallons of gas or oil (at about 75% efficiency) per person. This simply is not a substantial amount of our energy consumption, plain and simple. I believe that the biomass industry has successfully lobbied the State and Federal governments for these incentives, and that we, as a matter of creating good public policy, have lost our way on this issue. We should be looking elsewhere to solve our energy problem rather than rushing headlong onto an area that historically has not been able to provide energy at population and consumption levels as is currently the case. To say that biomass should be part of the mix is overestimating the biomass potential for energy use as we know it. To subsidize it is to erode our environment even more quickly than we already are.

The economic and benefits of giving the same money and incentives to conservation does not seem to be considered in your assessments of the pros and cons of biomass energy use. Your questions seem to assume that using biomass in a substantial way is a done deal rather than something to put on or off table.

I do not believe that your assessment have accurately described the soil depletion that occurs with consistent harvesting of forests.

Building big biomass plants, or cutting down trees with machines is something that men like to do. But women, for the most part, don't. I would request that your decision making team include 51% women. I think you guys need some help getting your priorities straight. Studies have shown that better decisions get made when you have more women around. I wish I were kidding here, but I am not.

Sincerely yours,

Janet Sinclair
Shelburne Falls, MA

